

USDAnews

USDA's Employee News Publication—For You & About You!

For USDA Employees Who Are Interested, This Is Definitely A Unique Overseas Assignment

Upon Return, They Described It As Life-Changing And Most Significant

by Ron Hall
Office of Communications

You say you're at a point in your USDA career where you're looking for something new, yet still challenging? At a far-off locale? With a different set of creature comforts? More adventurous and, yeah, maybe even at times somewhat dangerous?

Sooo, does duty in Afghanistan ring your chimes?

For the last several years USDA has recruited employees to volunteer for service in a number of agriculturally-related positions in Afghanistan. The Department is gearing up for yet another round of deployments—so here's some background about what this particular activity is all about.

"Over 23 years of war and internal conflict in Afghanistan have destroyed many Afghan government institutions and aspects of civil society, including a lot of that country's agricultural capabilities," advised **Otto Gonzalez**, a special projects officer in the Foreign Agricultural Service. "So we've been helping to reconstruct Afghanistan's agricultural institutions and revitalize its agricultural capacity."

Accordingly, FAS has been managing and coordinating participation by USDA employees in two particular programs designed to accomplish those

goals.

First, some USDA employees serve as members of "Provincial Reconstruction Teams" or PRTs. They are units normally commanded by a U.S. military Lt. Col. or Commander and are typically composed of about 50 or more military personnel—both "force protection personnel" and "civil affairs personnel"—plus a few civilian advisors.

"Our employees wear the 'civilian advisor' hat—specifically, as 'Agricultural Advisors,'" explained FAS special projects officer **Larry Trouba**. "There is usually one USDA employee per every U.S.-led Provincial Reconstruction Team—and, along with civilians from the U.S. Agency for International Development and the U.S. Department of State, they comprise the civilian component of a PRT."

Trouba said that the purpose of a PRT is to help establish security and support reconstruction projects and programs in provinces in Afghanistan, thereby enabling the Afghan national government—as well as various humanitarian aid organizations—to accomplish their reconstruction goals for that country.

So what's the specific role of the USDA 'Agricultural Advisor' on a Provincial Reconstruction Team?



Secretary **Mike Johanns** (left), North Salem, N.Y. portrait artist **Daniel Greene** (center), and former Secretary **Ann Veneman** admire Veneman's official portrait during its formal unveiling at USDA headquarters in Washington, DC on October 3. The portrait is now hanging in the Patio of USDA's Whitten Building—about which Veneman observed that "This building, and the South Building, where I began my career at USDA, have been a big part of my life for the past 20 years." Now the Executive Director of the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF), Veneman emphasized that "no matter where I go in the future, I will carry my love of this great Department, and its people, with me." NRCS historian **Douglas Helms** noted that her portrait is one of 28 portraits—of 27 former Secretaries plus, even earlier, one former Commissioner of Agriculture—on display in the area of the Patio.—**PHOTO BY KEN HAMMOND**

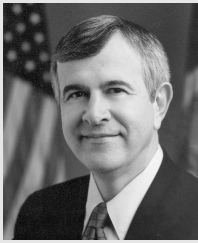
"Eighty percent of Afghans are involved in agriculture," replied Trouba. "But after 23 years of conflict, coupled with a long period of drought, the Afghan people have huge challenges to overcome—to rebuild their physical infrastructure for agricultural production, train farmers in improved methods, rehabilitate the country's degraded natural resources, and effectively participate in international agricultural markets."

Accordingly, since September 2003 USDA employees have participated in PRTs in Afghanistan in such activities as irrigation improvement, reforestation, tree nurseries, veterinary animal health care and education, agricultural education and exten-

sion, crop storage, soil conservation, horticulture, such energy initiatives as wind power through construction of windmills, and promoting crop alternatives to the growth of poppy—which is used to develop illegal drugs.

Trouba said that as of October 2006, 31 Departmental employees—from USDA headquarters and field locations—have served onsite in Afghanistan as members of Provincial Reconstruction Teams. They included employees from the Agricultural Marketing Service, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, the Farm Service Agency, FAS, the Forest Service, the Food

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Mike Johanns *Secretary of Agriculture*

Dear Fellow Employees, I had the privilege of honoring many of you for your exceptional service at the 59th annual USDA Honor Awards ceremony in October. This was my first Honor Awards ceremony and I was truly impressed by the wide variety of accomplishments that earned special recognition.

This year there were 34 individual and group award winners. They were honored for outstanding service in many fields, including stewardship of natural resources, scientific research, animal and plant disease control, environmental innovations, education outreach, emergency response to disasters, food safety, farm and food program delivery, trade and export development, and rural economic development. There were also awards for employees who performed individual acts of heroism and courage.

In addition, we acknowledged employees who participated in the rescue and recovery efforts in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita for their many sacrifices.

The exemplary service represented in these awards requires tremendous dedication on the part of our employees and often times equally commendable support from family and friends. So, I want to offer a special note of gratitude to the loved ones whose quiet support and behind-the-scenes commitment enabled our honorees to shine.

Every person who received an award used their experience and ingenuity to improve people's lives, to solve problems, to trim expenses, or to strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of our

programs. They worked day in and day out to advance our nation's well-being and secure our future.

Some made the ultimate sacrifice. We remember our Forest Service employees and our contract employee who lost their lives in August and October of this year in the line of duty. We miss them. To their families, I extend my heartfelt sympathy and deepest gratitude. Their work and the difference that they made will never be forgotten here at the USDA.

Our mandate from our founder, **Abraham Lincoln**, was to reach all the people of this great nation. That is something the entire USDA family does every day and does with great distinction. I consider this an opportunity to celebrate not only our award winners but the entire USDA family. You create opportunity for our farmers and ranchers, you ensure that our food is safe, you preserve our natural resources, you bring prosperity to our rural communities, you fight hunger, you provide a nutritional safety net for Americans, and you do so much more. Your work each and every day is what makes me so very proud to be the secretary of agriculture.

I especially want to salute those who work in the field, those who are truly on the front lines. You are the face of this Department. I've had a chance to meet many of you as I've traveled all across this great country, and I want you to know how much I appreciate what you do.

I'm very proud to have this brief opportunity in my life to work with you, to have this time to serve this very special Department. You have my sincere gratitude for the work you do in every state and so many countries, in our fields, forests, and research labs to strengthen our great nation. Thank you all. ■

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Safety and Inspection Service, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Rural Development.

Second, some USDA employees serve under a "Participating Agency Service Agreement," or PASA, between USDA and USAID. Since September 2004 they have generally worked directly with the Afghan Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, and Food or the Afghan Conservation Corps in such areas as livestock health; sanitary-phytosanitary and food safety issues; agricultural extension and education; conservation of biodiversity; protection and management of forests, rangelands, and watersheds; and rural access to information technology.

Gonzalez said that as of October 2006, 38 Departmental employees—from USDA headquarters and field locations—have served onsite in Afghanistan under a PASA. They included employees from the Agricultural Research Service, APHIS, CSREES, FAS, the Food and Nutrition Service, FS, NRCS, and the Office of the Secretary.

Wait a minute. For eons several USDA agencies—especially FAS—have posted its employees around the world in a variety of assignments. So what's so distinctly different

about *this* particular USDA activity, in Afghanistan?

"Well," Gonzalez replied, "unlike most other USDA assignments abroad, because of the security situation in Afghanistan our USDA personnel don't live in houses or stay in hotels, don't go to the market, and don't venture out on unofficial business. Plus, when they are out on official business they travel in an armored vehicle *within* Kabul, and are also accompanied by a civilian or military security detail when *outside of* Kabul. In addition, they live, sleep, and take most of their meals inside the highly-secure U.S. Embassy compound in Kabul—although their daily work is generally always outside that compound."

"In short," he added, "our employees are always under a 'security umbrella;' they're not just out there on their own."

"We're not wanting to put our employees in harm's way—but we all read the papers."

So how is the Department promoting this particular activity?

FAS development resources specialist **Sarah Librea** said that each USDA agency which is involved in some form of international activities generally has an 'international contact.' "That group of contacts meets once



"Say 'Aahhh'—and puleeez don't spit!" urges **Tom Lawlar** (left, wearing cowboy hat), the County Executive Director for FSA's County Office in Winnemucca, Nev. He is orally administering a liquid deworming medication into a camel, with help from two herdsman who own it, in Nawa-e Barakzaye, Afghanistan.—**PHOTO BY NAJEEB ULLAH**

a month," she noted, "and we publicize these assignments at those meetings." FAS generally relies on a single-sheet announcement, titled "Detail Opportunities in Afghanistan," to provide information on this periodic recruitment initiative.

FAS development resources specialist **Philippe Chabot** added that the assignments to Afghanistan normally vary in length from three weeks to a year, depending on

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Notes *from USDA Headquarters*

*In September Secretary **Mike Johanns** accepted the Thurgood Marshall 2006 Community Leadership Award on behalf of USDA employees and in October the Outstanding Public Sector Partner Award from the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU). The Secretary also released the fifth and final Farm Bill Theme paper and lauded a WTO decision that found Europe's moratorium against approving agricultural biotech products in violation of WTO rules.*

*In October, the Secretary observed the 60th anniversary of the National School Lunch Program, and, along with President **George W. Bush** and Energy Secretary **Samuel Bodman**, attended USDA's "Advancing Renewable Energy" Conference in St. Louis. He also participated in the World Food Prize Symposium in Des Moines, Iowa.*

Thurgood Marshall Award:

The Thurgood Marshall Scholarship Fund awarded USDA its 2006 Community Leadership Award in September. It recognizes the hard work of USDA employees whose contributions have ranged from engaging in minority employee recruitment to ensuring equitable access to USDA programs as well as distribution of program benefits to our diverse customers.

HACU Award:

The Outstanding Public Sector Partner award recognizes the extraordinary efforts of USDA employees to advance the mission and goals of HACU. Secretary Johanns said, "Partnering with HACU allows us to identify and develop promising young scholars who will carry USDA into the future. I am hon-

ored by this award, but I am even more grateful for the benefits that USDA receives from our partnership." More than 20 percent of former HACU interns now work at USDA as permanent employees.

"Strengthening The Foundation For Future Growth In U.S. Agriculture":

That's the title of the fifth and final Farm Bill analysis paper written by USDA economists. It is a comprehensive study of key factors that will affect future growth in U.S. agriculture: international trade, research and development, protection of agriculture from pests and diseases, and challenges in preparing the next generation of farmers. This paper as well as previously released papers are available at: www.usda.gov/farmbill.

Europe And Biotech:

Unlike the rest of the world, the European Union has long been skittish about embracing biotechnology and has banned new approvals of most new products for eight years. A recent decision by the World Trade Organization (WTO) may change all that if the EU complies. On Sept. 29, the WTO ruled in favor of the U.S., Argentina, and Canada in their case against the EU over its illegal moratorium on approving agricultural biotech products as well as against member country bans against previously approved products. "Since the first biotechnology crops were commercialized in 1996, we've seen double-digit increases in their adoption every single year. Biotechnology crops not only are helping to meet the world's food supply needs, they also are having a positive environmental impact on our soil and water resources," Secretary Johanns said.



Secretary **Mike Johanns** (center right) and U.S. Department of Energy Secretary **Samuel Bodman** (center)—assisted by science students from the St. Louis area—flip a switch on one of the renewable energy displays at the "Advancing Renewable Energy" Conference held in St. Louis October 10-12. USDA and DOE cohosted the conference which was designed to help create partnerships and strategies necessary to accelerate commercialization of renewable energy industries and distribution systems.—**PHOTO BY KEN HAMMOND**

National School Lunch Program:

The primary program for feeding school age children marked its 60th anniversary Oct. 10, during National School Lunch Week, Oct. 9-13. The National School Lunch Program now serves more than 30 million children each school day in 100,000 schools and residential child-care institutions. "During National School Lunch Week we acknowledge the vital role schools play in helping our children to develop healthy lifestyles by providing a nutritious school meal as well as teaching students the importance of physical activity and healthy choices," Secretary Johanns said.

World Food Prize:

At the 20th Annual International Symposium of the World Food Prize, Secretary Johanns spoke of the importance of public research and international trade in relieving world hunger.

"I believe so much in public research and the vital role that

it has to play and why it is so enormously important for government and government-funded researchers to stay closely connected to our private sector. You see public research lays the foundation. We do some problem solving and then often pass the torch to the private sector to take it to the finish line in the form of the commercialization of that product. Only then do we realize the broad social benefits."

Characterizing international trade and the promise of the Doha Development Round as an engine of economic growth that can reduce hunger, he said: "Two-thirds of the WTO member countries are developing countries... According to a World Bank study, roughly half of the global economic benefit for free trade would be enjoyed by these developing countries. I think that quote from a former president in a least developed country says it best. He says, 'The wrong policy on agriculture might lose elections in France, but it loses lives in Africa.'"

—**PATRICIA KLINTBERG**

We Honor Our Award-Winning USDA Achievers

by Charlene Baker
RD Human Resources Staff

USDA honored a number of its employees, for their outstanding achievements, at its 59th Annual USDA Honor Awards Ceremony, which took place Oct. 20, 2006 in the Jefferson Auditorium of the South Building at USDA headquarters in Washington, DC.

USDA honor awards that were presented at the Secretary's Honor Awards Ceremony were awarded to 34 recipients, including 5 individuals and 29 groups, with more than 600 USDA employee awardees in total.

At the ceremony Secretary **Mike Johanns** delivered the keynote address. "I may be a little partial," he told the audience. "But I don't think you'll find another federal agency like 'The People's Department.' . . . If I had just one message today, it would be to say: We're very proud of you. Your families are proud of you. And the nation you serve is very proud of you."

"You make my job easy because you're so good at what you do," he added. "You know that public service is more than a job, and it is, it's a calling. It's a commitment. And it goes way beyond 9-to-5."

Anita Adkins, USDA's Performance Management Program Manager with the Office of Human Capital Management, said that 35 nominations, which included 5 individuals and 30 groups, had been submitted through their respective subcabinet officials for concurrence. The nominations were then due for submission to OHCM personnel by July 1, 2006 for procedural review. Ultimately 34 nominations, which included 5 individuals and 29 groups, were forwarded to Johanns for ultimate approval.

"This program, which was created in 1947, recognizes the highest level of employee achieve-

ment," Adkins underscored. "These Honor Awards are the most prestigious awards presented by USDA."

Cecilia Matthews, USDA's Employee Recognition Program Manager in OHCM, said that the Secretary's Honor Awards Program had been revamped since the Honor Awards Ceremony was last held in June 2004. "The program was streamlined and revitalized, while reducing costs as appropriate," she said. The 2005 program and ceremony were suspended while this revamping took place. The May-June 2006 issue of the **USDA NEWS** carried a story about the changes to the Secretary's Honor Awards Program.

Patricia Kelly (Risk Management Agency), Washington, DC. *For Heroism and Emergency Response:* **Tamilyn Ferrier** (Forest Service), Gainesville, Ga.

The 29 Groups—which included over 600 USDA members—receiving USDA Honor Awards included:

For Enhancing Economic Opportunities for Agricultural Producers: the Leadership of Data Accessibility Team (Economic Research Service), Washington, DC, **Mary Maher**, Group Leader; the Operation Salsa Joint Task Force (Office of Inspector General), Birmingham, Ala., **Philip Maxey**, Group Leader; and the Rice Marketing Assistance Loan Group (Farm

Agriculture and Food Supply: the Asian Soybean Rust Team (Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service), Carlisle, Pa., **Coanne O'Hern**, Group Leader; the AssuranceNet Team (Food Safety and Inspection Service), Washington, DC, **Janet Stevens**, Group Leader; the Avian Influenza International Response Team (Foreign Agricultural Service), Washington, DC, **Jocelyn Brown**, Group Leader; the Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy Audit and Investigation Team (OIG), Kansas City, Mo., and Lakewood, Colo., **Dennis Gannon** and **William Busby**, Group Leaders; and the Lm Risk-Based Verification Testing Workgroup (FSIS), Washington, DC, **Ron Eckel**, Group Leader.

For Improving the Nation's Nutrition and Health: the HealthierUS School Challenge Team (Food and Nutrition Service), Alexandria, Va., **Clare Miller**, Group Leader; the MyPyramid Development Team (Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion), Alexandria, Va., **Jacqueline Haven**, Group Leader; and the MyPyramid Launches Group (FNS), Alexandria, Va., **Steven Savage**, Group Leader.

For Protecting and Enhancing the Nation's Natural Resource Base and Environment: the Animal Welfare Act Investigation and Prosecution Team (OIG), Little Rock, Ark., **Rickey Yopp**, Group Leader; the Creative Services Center (Office of Communications), Washington, DC, **Carolyn O'Connor**, Group Leader; the Energy Estimator Development Team (Natural Resources Conservation Service), Portland, Ore., **Stefanie Aschmann**, Group Leader; the Forest Service Firefighting Contract Crew Audit Team (OIG), San Francisco, Calif., **Frederick San Buenaventura**, Group Leader; the Hurricane Katrina Incident Management Recovery Implementation Team (FS), Atlanta, Ga., **David Carter**, Group Leader; and the USDA Greenhouse Gas Reporting Team (Office of the Chief Economist), *continued on pg. 7...*

Individual Honor Award Winners



D. Aune



V. Knight



J. Ordovas



P. Kelly



T. Ferrier

The five Individuals receiving USDA Honor Awards included:

For Enhancing Economic Opportunities for Agricultural Producers: **David Aune** (National Agricultural Statistics Service), Washington, DC; and **Vernett Knight** (Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration), New Orleans, La.

For Improving the Nation's Nutrition and Health: **Jose Ordovas** (Agricultural Research Service), Boston, Mass.

For Supporting the President's Management Agenda and Civil Rights:

Service Agency), Washington, DC, **Thomas Tice**, Group Leader.

For Supporting Increased Economic Opportunities and Improved Quality of Life in Rural Areas: the 4-H/Army Youth Development Project (Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service), Washington, DC, **Sharon Wright** (CSREES) and **John Macdonald** (U.S. Army), Group Leaders; and Water and Environmental Programs (Rural Development), Washington, DC, **Gary Morgan**, Group Leader.

For Enhancing Protection and Safety of the Nation's

USDA Spotlights Its "Unsung Heroes"

by Ron Hall
Office of Communications

USDA recognized 11 employees and one group as "Unsung Heroes" during its recent observance of Public Service Recognition Week.

According to **Farook Sait**, Special Counsel for the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights and President of the Organization of Professional Employees, U.S. Department of Agriculture (OPEDA), the purpose of the "Unsung Hero" designation is to identify those employees who have been "unusually dedicated and efficient and had a positive attitude."

He noted that nominees as "Unsung Heroes" are based on actual "hands-on" activities rather than on supervisory or managerial efforts. "However," he added, "all USDA employees were eligible to be nominated."

Holly Hayes Hambley, Executive Director of OPEDA and a retired research leader with the Agricultural Research Service, said that the idea for an "Unsung Heroes" contest was developed in 1987 by a group of six representatives of professional organizations in the Department. This is the 19th year of the contest, which was conducted USDA-wide. She noted that following a Departmentwide solicitation, 64 employees were nominated by fellow USDA employees. The final selection was made in April by a team of USDA officials. Related photos can be found at www.usda.gov/opeda.

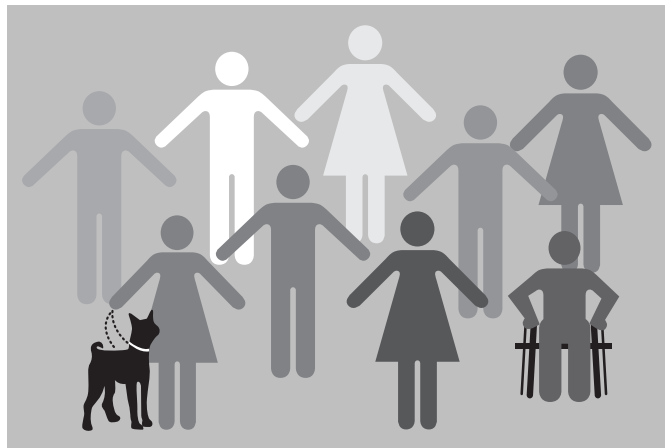
Hambley added that OPEDA, which was founded in 1929, is the largest and oldest professional organization at USDA.

USDA's "Unsung Heroes" for 2006 include:

① **Roberta Hodsdon**, the Federal Women's Program Manager for the Food and Nutrition Service's Mid-Atlantic Region based

in Robbinsville, N.J., who initiated a recycling project which is currently collecting used cell phones, from FNS employees, that are then being donated to (A) a national organization titled "Recycle for Breast Cancer," and (B) an area organization that supports battered women by providing them with cell phones for their protection.

② **Teresa Kelly-Reid**, a secretary with the Office of the Chief Information Officer in Beltsville, Md., who established—for the Associate Chief Information Officer for Telecommunications Services and Operations—a Time and Attendance (T&A) system, travel files and documentation, and purchase orders. In addition, for the last ten years she has served as a mentor for incoming secretaries to OCIO.



③ **Dwight LeBlanc**, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's Wildlife Services State Director for Louisiana, based in Port Allen, who—in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina—quickly organized APHIS Wildlife Services employees and equipment to provide direct onsite assistance to victims of that disaster. The Sept.-Oct. 2005 issue of the **USDA NEWS** carried a story and photos about the efforts of LeBlanc and other USDA employees.

④ **Matt Moore**, a research ecologist with ARS's National Sedimentation Lab in Oxford, Miss., who, in 2000, established and still coordinates that lab's

School Outreach Program. This includes serving as the main contact to coordinate local school tours of the lab and provide judges for school science fairs. His goal is to show K-12 students that science is not just a classroom subject—people are touched by science every day.

⑤ **Tony Myers**, a mail management specialist with the Office of Operations in Washington, DC, who has promoted "work sharing" between USDA and other government mail offices—in which each office performs a portion of the mail task so as to ultimately save time and money for both offices—and who has provided suggestions to other government mail offices, with the goal of providing more timely and cost effective mail management.

⑥ **Quan D. Quan**, a hydraulic engineer with the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Beltsville, Md., who, as executive vice president of USDA's Asian Pacific Islander Organization (APIO), streamlined the registration and budgeting process for attendees at APIO's annual training conferences, and who organized a program to provide relevant technical and leadership training at the conferences for those attendees.

⑦ **Bonnie Rose**, a senior microbiologist with the Food Safety and Inspection Service in Washington, DC, who is an acknowledged international authority on laboratory standards and meth-

ods. She earned this characterization by having provided leadership, in the mid-1980s and mid-1990s, to the [then] FSIS lab in Beltsville, Md., which developed tests for detecting the *E.coli* 0157:H7 and Salmonella microorganisms that are now used worldwide. She also led the lab investigation of the major *E. coli* outbreak in 1993 which resulted in FSIS developing and implementing more technologically advanced detection methods.

⑧ **Jo Lynne Seuffer**, a risk management specialist with the Risk Management Agency in its Regional Office in Spokane, Wash., who volunteered to serve as the agency's outreach coordinator and specialty crop coordinator for RMA activities in Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. In that capacity she has generated timely and effective news articles, fact sheets, rules changes, and other program information, which she then disseminates to members of the print and broadcast media.

⑨ **Craig Smith**, an employee relations specialist with the Office of Human Capital Management, who, for the past 18 years, has provided what has been described as the highest level of employee relations service, including accurate advice and a quality work product with a positive "can do" attitude, to his customers—managers, supervisors, and employees—within Departmental Administration at USDA.

⑩ **Carmen Velazquez**, currently a supervisory equal opportunity specialist with the Office of Civil Rights, who, previously as the team leader of OCR's Customer Service Unit, played a key role in the unit's creation in 2003 and then led the unit's activities until 2006. Its mission includes responding to inquiries, from internal and external customers, about the status of complaints of discrimination in USDA's programs and
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Editor's Roundup *USDA's people in the news*



Nancy Montanez Johner is the Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer

Services.

Before joining USDA, from March 2004 until her confirmation for this position by the U.S. Senate Johner served as Director of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. In that position she oversaw nearly 5,000 employees responsible for the administration of that state's

Food Stamp Program, Child Welfare Program, Office of Juvenile Services, Child Support Enforcement Program, Behavioral Health Program, Developmental Disabilities Program, Aging Program, and Veterans Homes Program.

From 2001-04 Johner was the Gering, Neb.-based Chief Executive Officer of the Western Service Area of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. She worked as a service area administrator, based in Lexington, Neb., for that state-level department from 1999-2001. From 1995-99 she

worked in a program she had started in 1995, which was based in Kearney, Neb., and titled the "Professional Partner Program," designed to work with children and youth with behavioral health disorders. From 1994-95 she worked in the Parent Assistance Support Services Program, at a hospital in Kearney, which was designed to find mentors for parents and children in need.

Eric Bost, the previous Under Secretary for FNCS, is now the U.S. Ambassador to South Africa, based in Pretoria. ■



Arlen Lancaster is the Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

From April 2005 until his appointment to this position Lancaster was USDA's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations. From 1999-2005 he served on the staff of U.S. Sen.

Mike Crapo (R-Idaho), including service since 2002 as a senior policy advisor and, since *continued on pg. 7...*

PROFILE PLUS *More About: Roger Klurfeld*



Roger Klurfeld is a New York City native who heads a little known USDA Office with major clout.

Created by Congress in 1994, the National Appeals Division (NAD) is an independent office that reports directly to the Secretary. It is the final authority for USDA customers who have received

an adverse decision from one of four agencies: FSA, RMA, NRCS, and RD. If a person has been turned down for a farm loan, had a mortgage accelerated, or been denied program payments or assistance, NAD will hear the appeal.

For example, a producer wants to enter land into the Conservation Security Program, but whether the land receives funding depends on its slope. If the agency, in this case NRCS, finds the land ineligible for funding, the producer has the option to appeal to the county FSA committee or appeal directly to NAD, where the producer can submit oral or written evidence to support his position.

The appeal process has two stages. A participant has a right to a hearing in his state of residence face-to-face with a NAD Hearing Officer. Depending on the Hearing Officer's decision, either the participant or the agency may ask the NAD Director to reverse it.

It pays to appeal. In 2004, FSA issued about 440,000 decisions unfavorable to customers. In that year, NAD received only about 3,000 appeals and 30 percent of the agency adverse decisions underlying those appeals were either withdrawn by the agency or reversed by NAD.

Klurfeld has long experience in the art of dealing with disputes. He came to NAD from the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Hearings and Appeals where he was Assistant Director for Legal Analysis. That office oversaw the refund of billions of dollars obtained from overcharges by oil companies during the 1970's federal price control program. It processed requests for waivers from DOE regulations and appeals from orders issued by other DOE offices. Klurfeld also served as a Hearing Officer in cases involving personnel security clearance revocations and the DOE whistleblower program covering contract employees. He has a B.A. in Public

Policy from New College of Florida in Sarasota, plus M.B.A. and J.D. degrees from Florida State University.

Now in his fourth year of a six-year term, Klurfeld has focused on getting the word out about NAD to farmers with the "Face to Face Fairness" campaign. For instance, you may see NAD booths at various farm shows. The NAD website also has been made user friendly. All Hearing Officer and Director decisions are posted on the web, generally within 48 hours of issuance, and Klurfeld hopes appeals will be able to be filed electronically in the future. "We cannot guarantee the outcome but we want program participants to know that they have an option when they get an adverse decision from an agency," he said.

Equally important is Klurfeld's effort to create a uniform method of communicating among his 70 NAD Hearing Officers located throughout the country. All take refresher courses in writing and rhetoric, using a style guide compiled by Klurfeld just for NAD. In addition, Hearing Officers take a two-day course in Logic.

"We focus on writing clearly so the participant can understand the decision and does not feel the need to have a lawyer to interpret it," he said. In addition, "given the ambiguities that can arise and the money that can be at stake, our Hearing Officers must be able to convey a clear and logical determination, which addresses the appellant's concerns, sends a message that all producers can expect to have an opportunity to tell their side of the story and receive fair consideration."

Last Book Read: "Sacred Hoops, Spiritual Lessons of a Hardwood Warrior" by **Phil Jackson**. "The book is about coaching teams of people with diverse skill levels," Klurfeld said. "It's required reading for NAD managers."

Last Movie Seen: "Ray" with **Jamie Foxx**.

Hobbies: Photography, computers, cooking.

Favorite Weekend Breakfast: Eggs over easy, bacon, and hash brown potatoes.

Priorities In The Months Ahead: "To continue working to let program participants know they have an option when they get an adverse decision. They can either live with the decision or appeal. There is an alternative."

—PATRICIA KLINTBERG

2001, as the staff director for the Senate Agriculture Subcommittee on Forestry, Conservation, and Rural Revitalization, where he helped to draft the conservation title of the 2002 Farm Bill.

Lancaster worked for U.S. Sen. **Robert Bennett** (R-Utah) as a special assistant from 1998-99. From 1994-98 he worked as a consultant for governmental affairs consulting firms based in Salt Lake City.

Bruce Knight, the previous Chief of NRCS, is now the Department's Under Secretary for Marketing

and Regulatory Programs. ■



Steven **Shafer** is the Director of the Agricultural Research Service's Midwest Area, based in Peoria, Ill.

From January 2005 until his selection for this position Shafer served as the Associate Director of ARS's Midwest Area. He was the Beltsville, Md.-based National Program Leader for the ARS Glob-

al Change National Program from 2000-2005, focusing on "adaptation"—i.e., ways in which the agricultural sector can avoid losses to adverse weather and climate, plus ways to take advantage of changing climate and atmospheric chemistry—and "mitigation"—i.e., methods to reduce agriculture's contributions to greenhouse gases and help remove them from the atmosphere.

From 1998-2000 Shafer was Deputy Director for Environment and Plant Health in USDA's Office of Risk Assessment and Cost-

Benefit Analysis. He worked as a plant pathologist and the site coordinator at the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's Center for Plant Health Science and Technology in Raleigh, N.C., from 1997-98. He began his federal career in 1983 as a research plant pathologist with ARS's Air Quality, Plant Growth and Development Research Unit in Raleigh.

Adrianna Hewings, the previous Director of ARS's Midwest Area, retired from that position following 22 years of federal service, and all of it with ARS. ■

Award-Winning...continued from pg. 4 Washington, DC, **William Hohenstein**, Group Leader.

For Supporting the President's Management Agenda and Civil Rights: the Civil Rights Enterprise System Team (Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights), Washington, DC, **Sadhna True**, Group Leader; the Human Capital Management Team (FSIS), Washington, DC, **Yvonne Davis**, Group Leader; the Illinois Accessibility Team (RD), Champaign,

Ill., **Cara Clark** (NRCS), Group Leader; the National Payment Accuracy Work Group (FNS), Alexandria, Va., **Karen Walker**, Group Leader; the Poteau River Watershed Team (NRCS), Stillwater, Okla., **Phoukham Vongkhamdy**, Group Leader; and the USDA Human Capital Team (Departmental Administration), Washington, DC, **Clifton Taylor**, Group Leader.

For Heroism and Emergency Response: District Directors IV

and V (FSA), Brookhaven, Miss., **William Parish**, Group Leader; the Food Safety Education Hurricane Response Team (FSIS), Washington, DC, **Susan Conley**, Group Leader; the GIPSA Hurricane Response Team (GIPSA), New Orleans, La., **Kerry Petit**, Group Leader; and Katrina Disaster Food Assistance (Agricultural Marketing Service), Alexandria, Va., **Catherine McCullough** (FNS), Group Leader.

For more detailed information about the Secretary's Honor Awards Ceremony, including the text and photos contained in the Annual Honor Awards Program booklet with citations for each award, a video of the Honor Awards Ceremony itself, and a video recognizing USDA employees who participated in rescue and recovery efforts in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, go to www.usda.gov/sec_annual_honor_awards.xml ■

"Unsung Heroes"...continued from pg. 5 services and complaints of discrimination in employment matters. She also played a key role in streamlining the process, providing one-stop shopping so persons with civil rights-related inquiries can now more easily go to one source for a response.

⑪ **Katy Vernon**, an animal

care inspector with APHIS in Fort Collins, Colo., who provided valuable onsite hands-on assistance in the veterinary care of rescued animal pets in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Secondly, she provided advice on the safe and humane transport of pets away from the temporary pet evacuation shelters to more permanent shelters. Thirdly, she

provided advice on the design and construction of temporary animal shelters, after the original shelters had been destroyed during the storm.

⑫ a group of 11 NRCS employees based in Louisiana, for their rescue efforts in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Specifically, they used NRCS-owned shallow-

water boats to rescue over 300 individuals who were stranded in their flooded residences in Orleans Parish, La. They transported the stranded individuals to temporary staging areas, for ultimate transfer to permanent shelters. **Randolph Joseph** is the Area Conservationist who represented that group of 11 NRCS employees. ■

Unique...continued from pg. 2

whether it is part of a PRT or PASA. USDA participants must be at least a GS-11.

Once selected but before departure, USDA participants receive some form of an orientation stateside, plus a follow-up orientation upon arrival. "We give 'em books and articles to read on Afghanistan," Librea pointed out. "We certainly don't want any of our employees to be unprepared."

Trouba added that there is a USDA contact person, normally located at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, who provides logistical and administrative support to USDA employees participating in this initiative.

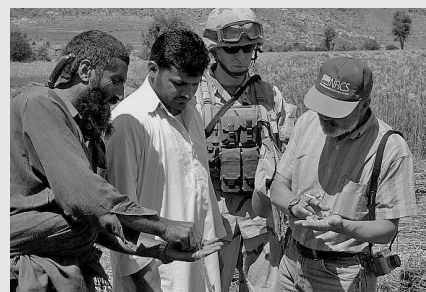
All USDA employees working in Afghanistan, as part of this initiative, qualify for

"Danger Pay" of 35 percent of that employee's basic pay.

And, following completion of tours of duty in Afghanistan, have USDA participants expressed any common reactions?

"Well, those who go there onsite must, of course, be willing to live and work in remote locations in a volatile and unpredictable security environment," acknowledged Gonzalez. "But, then, USDA employees typically come back and speak of their experiences in-country in 'life-changing terms,' emphasizing how they feel it's one of the most significant things they've done in their career. In fact, several have done repeat assignments there."

"Does that answer the question?" ■



Manuel Ayala (right, wearing cap), an NRCS international programs specialist based at the agency's office in Beltsville, Md., confers with Afghan farmers and a U.S. military member of a Provincial Reconstruction Team about the size and different varieties of wheat grains at a wheat farm in Asadabad, Afghanistan.—**PHOTO BY WILL HALL**



The setting is Kandahar, Afghanistan, where **Mahmood Ramzan** (center, wearing glasses)—normally a deputy district manager with FSIS in that agency's district office in Springdale, Ark.—is advising on animal health issues in that geographic area with the Afghan district leader (center, with beard) and a U.S. military member of a "PRT," or "Provincial Reconstruction Team" (right). Ramzan served on that PRT for six months. It's one of the ways that USDA employees, from headquarters and field locations, are currently aiding Afghanistan—on-site—in agriculturally-related activities. Note the story about this USDA program—and why it is particularly unique—on page 1.—**PHOTO BY CLAUDIA BULLARD**



Help Us Find Nicky Mitchell

Missing: 9-20-2006

D.O.B. 3-6-1999

Hair: Brown

Height: 4 ft. 8 in.

From: Hollywood, FL

Sex: Female

Eyes: Brown

Weight: 70 lbs.

If you have information, please call

1-800-843-5678

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